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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003589

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI VP BRIEFS CHARGE ON REGIONAL TRIP,  
RECONCILIATION PROCESS, INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A. HILLAH 142

[B](#). BAGHDAD 3515  
[C](#). BAGHDAD 3457

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi told the Charge on September 23 that his recent trip to the UAE and Saudi Arabia was successful, with leaders of both countries praising Prime Minister Maliki and affirming their support for his government. Abdel Mehdi welcomed U.S. efforts to refute perceptions that the U.S. was turning away from the Shi'a in Iraq but noted these perceptions would not change overnight. He pointed to a recent meeting between bloc leaders on improving security in Diyala province as evidence that the reconciliation process was moving in a positive direction. Finally, he described the Sadrists as "confused," struggling to respond to Maliki's demand that they either stay in government and stop militia and extrajudicial killings, or leave. END SUMMARY.

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Drumming Up Regional Support  
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[1](#)2. (C) Prompted by the Charge, Abdel Mehdi provided a readout of his recent trip to Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia to seek regional support for the Iraqi government. He described the trip as a success, noting that both Prince Khalifa and King Abdullah praised Maliki's efforts to date. Abdel Mehdi said he raised the issue of debt relief in both countries, though he reported no specific progress. He described a particularly positive response in the UAE to reconciliation efforts, saying that some key Sunnis had "changed their language" from a year ago and were now providing "names, addresses, and phone numbers" of insurgents.

[1](#)3. (C) Abdel Mehdi noted that he was able to talk directly with King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan "about their concerns on federalism, Iranian influence, and the region's Shi'a." He said he raised the issue of Iraqi participation in the upcoming hajj and that Saudi leaders had ordered that a visa be issued to the head of Iraq's hajj commission. Despite pressing King Abdullah on the importance of having a Saudi diplomatic presence in Iraq, however, Abdel Mehdi received no satisfaction on that score: "The King said that he did not want to risk a life, and I think he also fears the reaction."

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Shi'a Perceptions  
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14. (C) Referring to Abdel Mehdi's recent trip to Washington, the Charge said he hoped Abdel Mehdi had received a clear message that the U.S. was committed to its strong relationship with Shi'a in Iraq, despite reports of perceptions among the Shi'a that the U.S. was turning its back on them. Abdel Mehdi affirmed that he had heard and welcomed that message, but that it would take a longer period to change people's perceptions. He noted the Shi'a view that the process of bringing the Sunnis into the political process was not balanced. "You accepted any candidates the Sunnis put forward, but you fully screened anyone we presented. And now," he continued with chagrin, "you are talking about militias as if they were terrorists."

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Militias, Violence, and Reconciliation  
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15. (C) Abdel Mehdi assured the Charge that "we are sincere in saying we don't want militias as long as the government is doing its duty." He said on the positive side that people believe the level of violence in Baghdad has gone down with the implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan, but noted that car bombs were still plaguing various areas of the country. Abdel Mehdi mentioned that a September 21 meeting between the various political blocs to discuss how to improve security in Diyala province had been successful. He said that the blocs had agreed to form a committee to continue this cooperation on Diyala and expressed his hope that other security issues could be addressed in a similar way. He mentioned that Harith al-Dari, head of the Muslim Scholars Association, had recently called for a meeting of religious leaders from different sects, characterizing it as a "good proposal." (NOTE: It is not clear if al-Dari was calling for a conference separate from the one proposed by the National

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Reconciliation Commission for religious leaders. END NOTE.)

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"Confusion" in the Sadrists Ranks  
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16. (C) Asked by the Charge what he made of rumors that the Sadrists are thinking of designating new people for their cabinet ministries, Abdel Mehdi portrayed the Sadrists as "in a state of confusion." Maliki, he continued, had told the Sadrists "either to stay in the government and quit all other activities (impliedly, militia activity and extrajudicial killings), or to leave." He noted tangentially that Sadrists leaders were trying to figure out whether two recent MNF-I and ISF operations, including the detention of three bodyguards of a Sadrists MP and the detention of Sheikh Salah Al-Obeid, were in response to the Sadrists call on the CoR floor for a timetable for MNF-I withdrawal (reftels).  
KHALILZAD